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Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

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BORDER, AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Written Testimony for Clay Higgins (R-LA)  
National Security Priorities and National Defense Authorization Act FY2025  
House Armed Services Committee  
April 11, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Smith, for the opportunity to discuss the importance of this year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and the national security priorities of the country going forward. The NDAA is essential to ensure key programs, secure the proper funding to enhance the defense capabilities of our country, and further deter our adversaries.

The NDAA has an unparalleled impact on our nation's defense as a whole, and it is a vital and critical piece of legislation for South Louisiana. Louisiana is home to many of the nation's storied small shipyards and essential industries for the military's operations and maintenance, with several located in Louisiana's 3rd District. Each of these assets relies on the NDAA's guidance and funding support for our defense capabilities.

I wish to inform the committee of a few opportunities for the fiscal year 2025 NDAA that would have a direct impact on my home state of Louisiana.

First, I would like to discuss the importance of the 40-foot patrol boats and funding to keep this program on track and on schedule. The 40-foot patrol boats are essential to the Navy's mission and support a wide range of maritime security operations and tasks. Small shipyards, like Metal Shark Boats in Louisiana's 3<sup>rd</sup> District, have been delivering these patrol boats on schedule. In order for small shipyards to maintain this timely delivery of the 40-foot patrol boats, a total budget increase of \$52.2 million for a total of \$60 million for FY25 is necessary for the Navy to maintain these critical assets to our national defense.

Further, funding and support are needed to modernize the living and housing conditions for thousands of Navy personnel. It was disappointing to see that there was no funding included within the President's proposed budget for fiscal year 2025 for the new class of Yard, Repair, Berthing, and Messing (YRBM) barge crafts essential to this modernization effort. The Navy has requested an acceleration of this program since 2022, which would entail that 2 YRBM vessels be funded in FY2025 for a total of \$60 million.

Small shipyards in Louisiana have a storied history of providing premier vessels for our nation's Armed Forces. As the Department of Defense and the country as a whole look toward

future technology and the use of autonomous craft, I believe it is essential that Congress secure the proper funding for the research and development of these programs. Autonomous vessels are the future and can be made at a relatively low cost and in an expedited timeline, allowing the U.S. to deploy faster and overwhelm our adversary's own capabilities.

Additionally, my office has received requests aimed at advancing military and commercial satellite programs that would encourage domestic manufacturing of critical resources as well as the operations and maintenance support for our Armed Forces that are deployed. Authorized funding for these programs would have a direct impact on South Louisiana and would enable a strong U.S. position across the world. I believe the most righteous posture to avoid war is to effectively prepare to dominate any aggressor across the globe, and nowhere is that mission clearer than in the Pacific.

As the committee reviews priorities for the NDAA, I implore you to consider programs that would have a direct impact on Louisiana and increase our force readiness as a nation. I appreciate my colleagues on this committee who I, as well as my staff, have been in communication with regarding the NDAA, and I appreciate the time given to Members to speak before the committee to discuss the importance of the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2025.

My office stands ready and able to provide more information regarding the requests that were received for the National Defense Authorization Act. I respectfully request that thoughtful consideration be given to the industry in South Louisiana for this year's NDAA.